

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 DAMASC 05488 261737Z  
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
USIA-06 /057 W  
-----073898 270227Z /65

R 261536Z AUG 77  
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4591  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT POUCH  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 5488

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, SY  
SUBJ: CORRUPTION CAMPAIGN COUNTINUES

REF: DAMASCUS 5335

### 1. SUMMARY:

THE FIRST RESULTS OF THE ANTI-CORRUPTION CAMPAIGN  
SIGNALLED BY PRESIDENT AL-ASSAD'S AUGUST 18 SPEECH ARE  
MODEST ENOUGH EVEN IF THE PRESS HAS CONTINUED TO GIVE  
THE CAMPAIGN WIDE COVERAGE. SYRIANS REMAIN HIGHLY  
SKEPTICAL AND REFUSE TO BELIEVE ANY REAL CHANGE IS IN  
THE WIND IN THE ABSENCE OF CURTAILING OF PROMINENT MEMBERS  
OF LEADERSHIP AND ABOVE ALL OF THE PRESIDENTS OWN BROTHER,  
RIFAT. RIFAT HAS BECOME THE SYMBOL OF CORRUPTION AND  
ACTION AGAINST HIM THE BAROMETER OF THE PRESIDENT'S  
SERIOUSNESS FOR MANY SYRIANS. A SOLUTION TO THE PRESIDENT'S  
DILEMMA MAY HAVE BEEN HINTED AT BY THE CAHIRMAN OF THE  
INVESTIGATIVE COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION QHEN HE  
SIGNALLED THAT PAST CORRUPTION IS UNDERSTANDABLE GIVEN THE  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 DAMASC 05488 261737Z

CONDITIONS WHICH PREVAILED, BUT FUTURE ILL-GOTTEN GAINS WILL  
NOT BE TOLERATED. END SUMMARY

2. THE FIRST RESULTS OF PRESIDENTS AL-ASSAD'S ANTI-CORRUPTION  
CAMPAIGN ARE BEGINNING TO COME IN. THE PRESS REPORTED AUGUST 25  
IN FRONT PAGE HEADLINES THAT SOME PERSONS (UNIDENTIFIED) HAD  
CONSPIRED WITH A FOREIGN COMPANY (UNIDENTIFIED) DO DEFRAUD

THE STATE OF \$29,800. OF THIS AMOUNT, \$26,800 WAS RECOVERED. AHMAD DIAB, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE INVESTIGATIVE COMMISSION SET UP BY ASSAD, SAID THAT FULL DETAILS OF THIS INCIDENT WOULD BE PUBLICIZED. IN A STATEMENT AUGUST 25 DIAB RE-AFFIRMED THAT THE COMMISSION WILL DO INJUSTICE TO NO ONE BUT THAT NO CULPRIT WHATEVER HIS POSITION OF LEVEL WILL ESCAPE INVESTIGATION. HE REITERATED THIS LATTER POINT SEVERAL TIMES. NEVERTHELESS, IN A HINT THAT SOME EXCESSES MAY BE EXCUSED, DIAB POINED OUT THAT BECAUSE OF THE RAPID PACE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMEN IT IS NATURAL SOME INDIVIDUALS' INCOMES HAVE INCREASED. HE ADDED THAT I IS ALSO NATURAL THAT CORRUPTION HAS APPEARED, BUT IT IS NOT NATURAL FOR IT TO CONTINUE.

3. THE CAMPAIGN HAS GENERATED WIDE PRESS COVERAGE AND, FOR THE MOST PART, DEEP SKEPTICISM AMONG THE CITIZENS OF DAMASCUS. BUSINESSMEN, MERCHANTS, EMBASSY EMPLOYEES AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WE HAVE TALKED TO DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE PRESIDENT HAS ANY INTENTION OF ROOTING OUT CORRUPTION AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS, THOUGH THEY ADMIT A MINISTER OR TWO MAY BE SACRIFICED TO GIVE THE CAMPAIGN CREDIBILITY. THIS WILL NOT SATISFY MOST SYRIANS.

4. THE SYRIANS TEND TO IDENTIFY RIFAT AL-ASSAD AS A SYMBOL FOR ALL MALFACTORS IN THE COUNTRY. ON AUGUST 21 THAWRA EDITOR ALI SULEIMAN WROTE "THOUGH WE ARE CONVINCED THAT  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 DAMASC 05488 261737Z

INVESTIGATION HAS BECOME AN URGENT NATIONAL REQUIREMENT, THERE ARE OBSTACLES. FORST, WE MUST KNOW WHOM TO INVESTIGATE. THESE PEOPLE COULD BE CATEGORIZED AS FOLLOWS:

"A. THOSE WHO BECOAME RICH AT THE EXPENSE OF THE PEOPLE AND THE COUNTRY AND WHO USED THEIR POSITIONS AND THE CONFIDENCE OF THE LEADER TO INCREASE THEIR REICHS.

"B. THOSE WHO TOOK ADVANTAGE OF CIRCUMSTANCES WHEN THE COUNTRY WAS BUSY IN A DIFFICULT HISTORICAL STAGE.

"C. THOSE WHO TRIED INTENTIONALLY OR OTHERWISE TO OBSTRUCT THE PRODUCTIVE WILL OF THE PEOPLE.

"D. THOSE WHO PROPAGATE DESPAIR AND CONCEPTS WHICH LEAD TOREWAKENING NATIONAL UNITY..."

WHILE THIS DESCRIPTION OF A TYPICAL CORRUPT OFFICIAL COULD APPLY TO ANY NUMBER OF HIGH LEVEL PROSONALITIES, MOST SYRIANS WE HAVE TALKED TO IMMEDIATELY CLAIMED SULEIMAN WAS DESCRIBING RIFAT.

5. FEELING AGAINST RIFAT BOTH AMONG THE GENERAL PUBLIC AND WITHIN THE BAATH PARTY LEADERSHIP IS INTENSE. RIFAT HAS BEEN CONSISTENTLY OPPOSED BY BAATH PARTY SUNNI HEAVYWEIGHTS LIKE NAJI JAMIL, MOHAMMAD BAJBUJ, MUSTAFA TLASS AND OTHERS WHO ARE ASSUMED LOYAL TO PRESIDENT ASSAD BUT

WHO DEPLORE RIFAT'S ARROGANCE, HIS CORRUPT PRACTICES,  
AND HIS UNBOUNDED POWER AND BELIEVE HE UNDERMINES RATHER THAN  
REINFORCES HIS BROTHER'S STABILITY. THUS, WE DOUBT ANY  
MOVE AGAINST CORRUPTION WILL BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY BY SYRIANS  
WULESS RUFAT, AMONG OTHERS, IS SOMEHOW BROUGHT TO AN  
ACCOUNTING. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE PRESIDENT WILL NOT WANT  
TO ACT AGAINST HIS BROTHER OR UNDERMINE HIS CONTROL OF  
CRITICAL SECURIY FORCES. DIAB MAY HAVE HINTED AT A  
SOLUTION TO THE PRESIDENT'S DILEMMA: CORRUPTION IN THE  
PAST IS UNDERSTANDABLE UT WILL NOT BE TOLERATED IN THE  
FUTURE. THIS APPROACH MAY BE ACCEPTABLE TO SYRIANS, HHO  
UNDERSTAND THE REQUIREMENTS OF FAMILY LOYALTY, IF INDEED  
RIFAT ASSAD AND HIS ILK IN THE PARTY LEADERSHIP ARE NOT  
BROUGHT TO HEEL.  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 DAMASC 05488 261737Z

MURPHY

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** CORRUPTION, GOVERNMENT REFORM, PUBLICITY CAMPAIGNS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Sent Date:** 26-Aug-1977 12:00:00 am  
**Decaption Date:** 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1977DAMASC05488  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
**Film Number:** D770310-0222  
**Format:** TEL  
**From:** DAMASCUS  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1977/newtext/t19770820/aaaaaqii.tel  
**Line Count:** 137  
**Litigation Code IDs:**  
**Litigation Codes:**  
**Litigation History:**  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Message ID:** 3d79e852-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Office:** ACTION NEA  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 77 DAMASCUS 5335  
**Retention:** 0  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 22-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**SAS ID:** 1476589  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** CORRUPTION CAMPAIGN COUNTINUES  
**TAGS:** PINT, SY, (AL-ASSAD, HAFIZ)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**vdkgvwkey:** odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS\_Docs/3d79e852-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009